



BATMAN

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY



GRANT
BREYFOGLE
MITCHELL



IDENTITY CRISIS: PART ONE



"A masked person is not simply a man or woman whose real identity is hidden, but he is an enigmatic entity standing outside the sphere of ordinary conduct...enjoying a freedom of movement and conduct denied to ordinary men." --*ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MAGIC AND SUPERSTITION*

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BATMAN 455 Published monthly by DC Comics Inc., 905 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10108. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BATMAN, DC Comics Subscriptions, P.O. Box 0528, Baldwin, NY 11510. Annual subscription rate \$12.00, Canada \$17.00, all other foreign \$24.00. U.S. funds only. Copyright © 1990 DC Comics Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and models mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. All characters featured in this issue and distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of DC Comics Inc. Advertising Representative: Print Advertising Representatives, 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017 (212) 944-6860. Printed in U.S.A.

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G-5900

ALMOST DAWN.
ANOTHER NIGHT
RAPIDLY CHARTERED.

THE CITY
STAYS THE
GAME. ONLY
I GET
OLDER.

THE BLOOD IS DRYING
ON THE STREETS.
HOSPITAL CASUALTY
CREWS RELAX. THE
NIGHT-PEOPLE DRINK
UP AND HEAD HOME.

BUS
STOP

BAR

EVIL GLIMPS BACK INTO
ITS HOLES, AFRAID TO
FACE THE COMING OF
THE LIGHT.

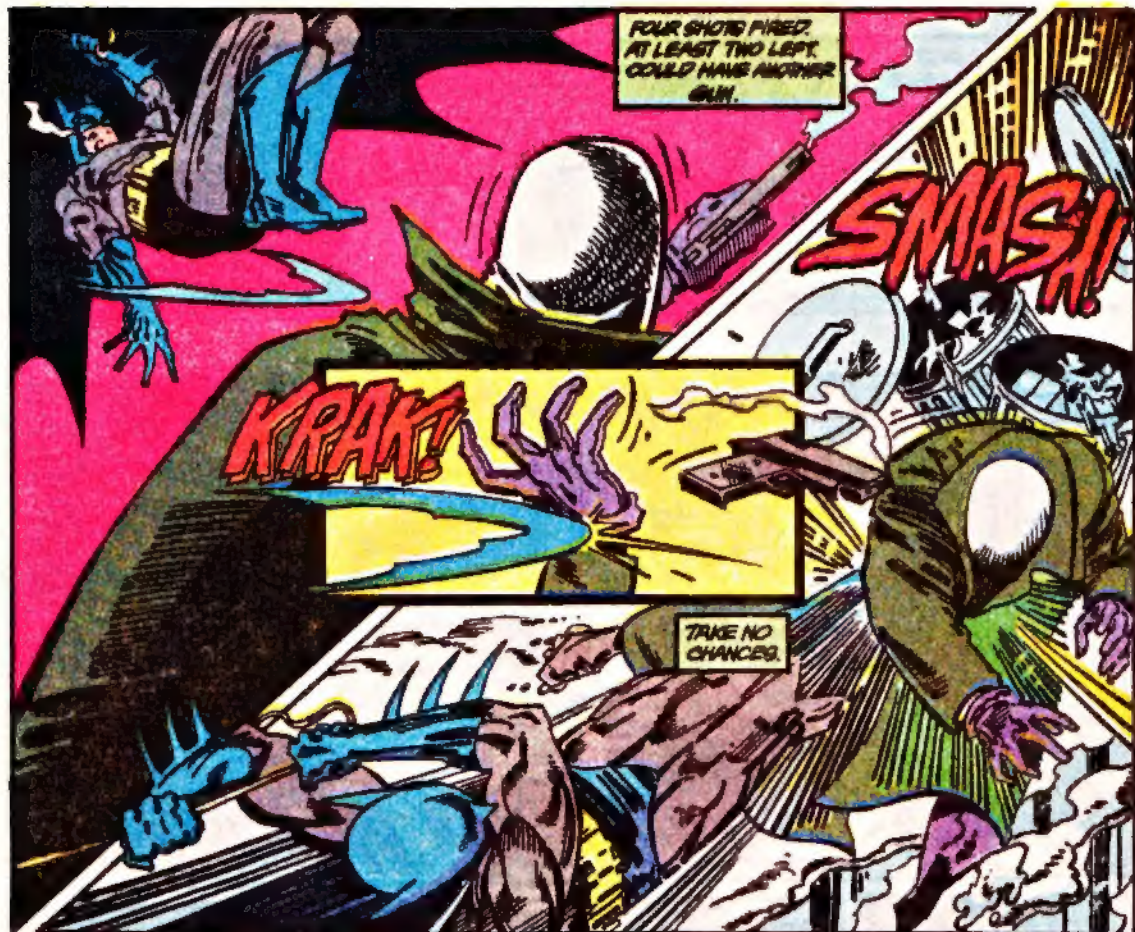
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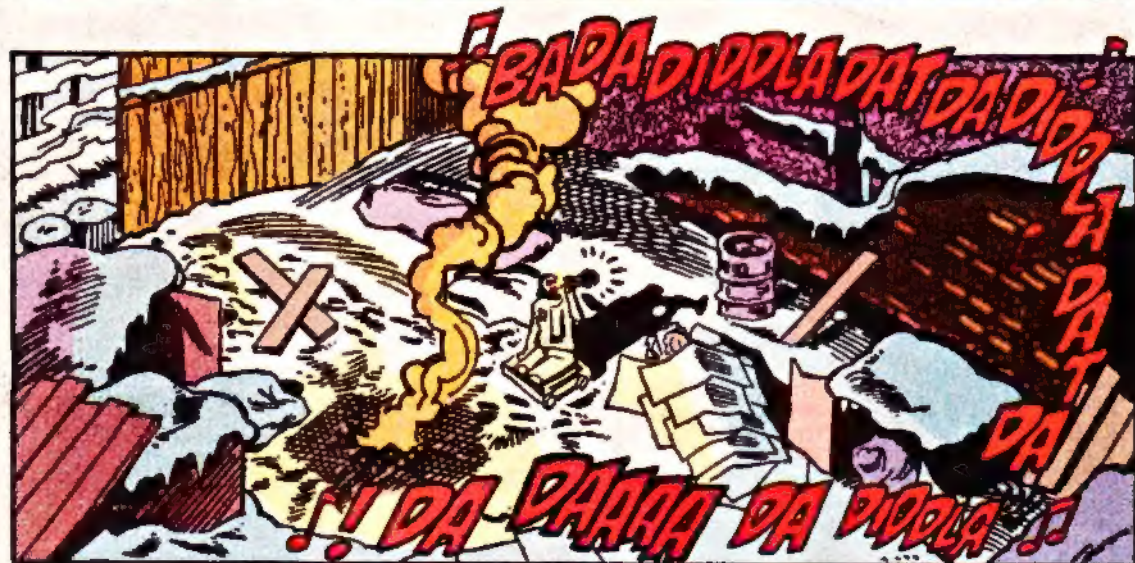
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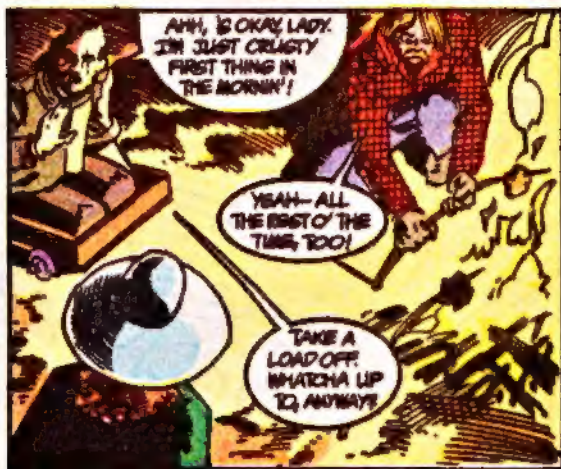
--NOT
ALWAYS!

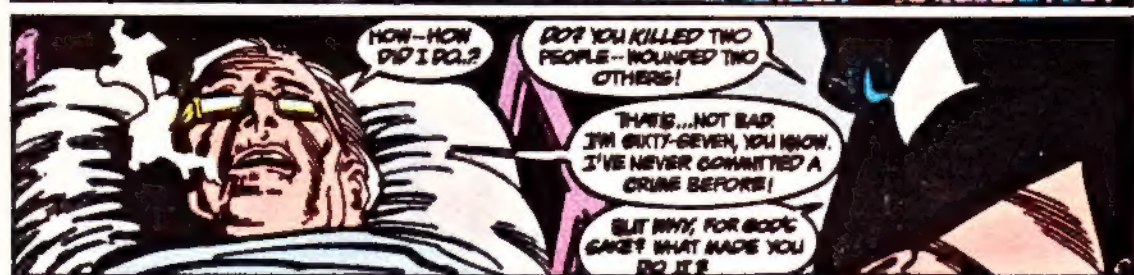
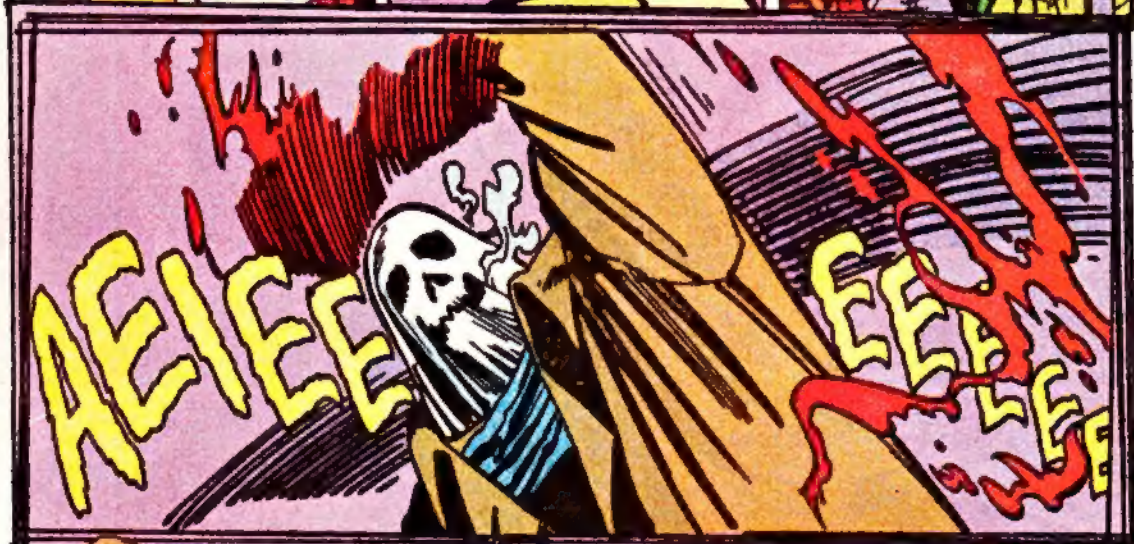
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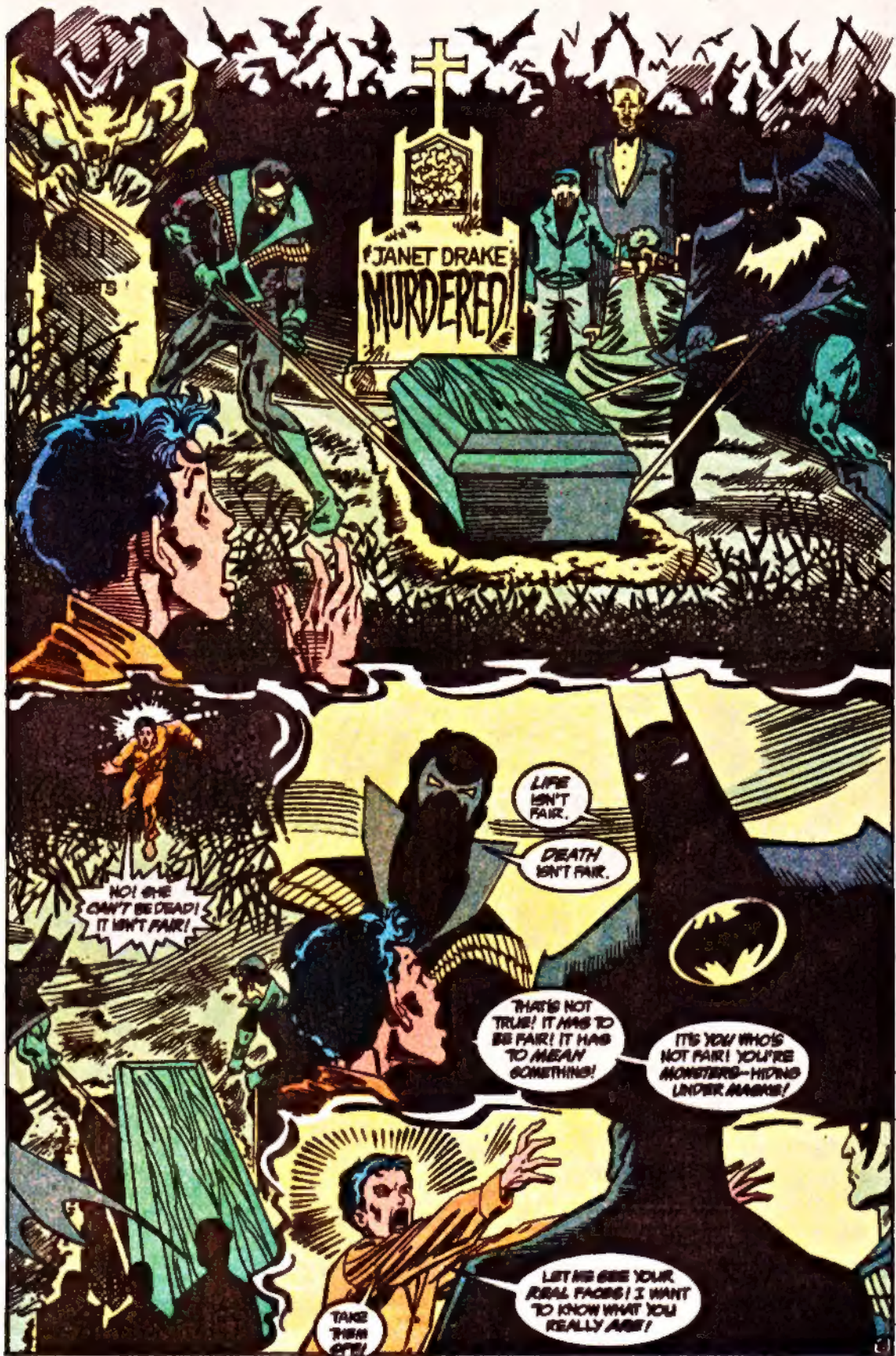




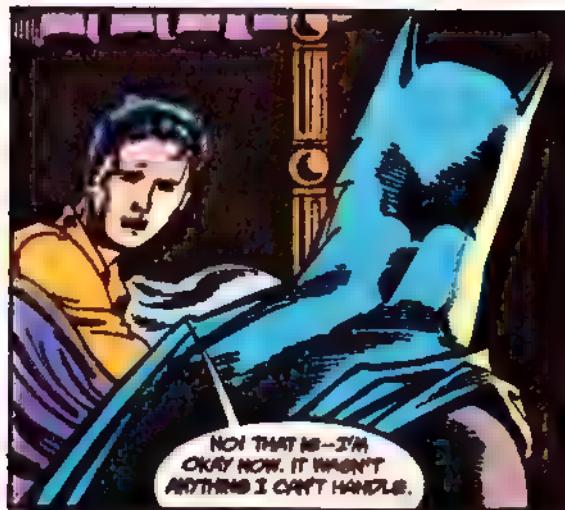


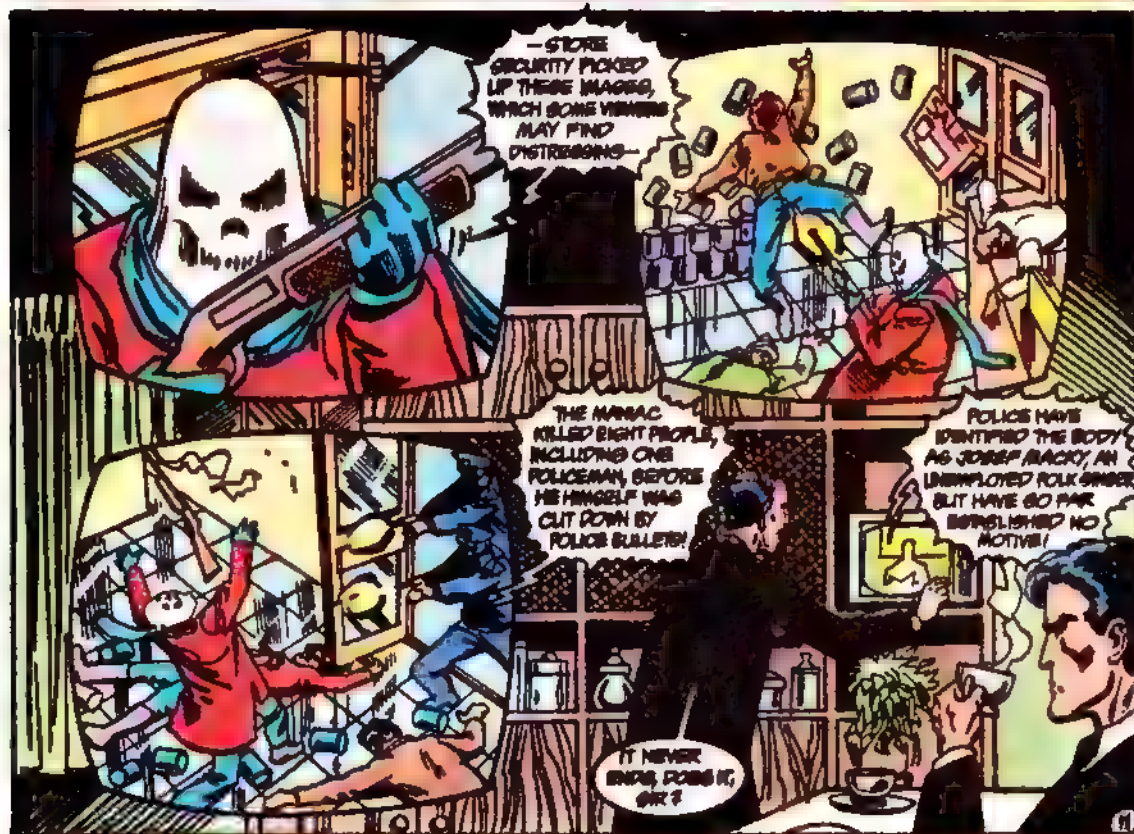
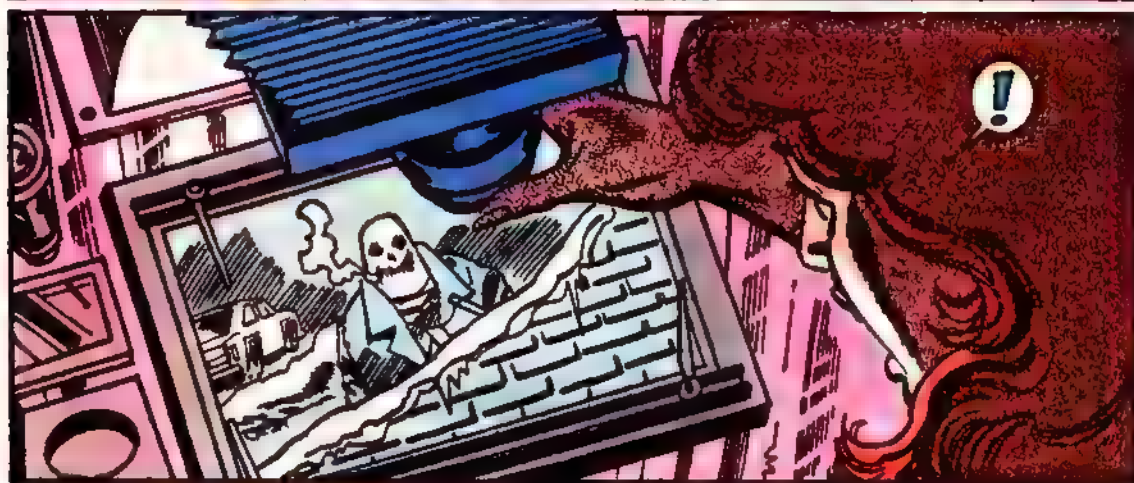


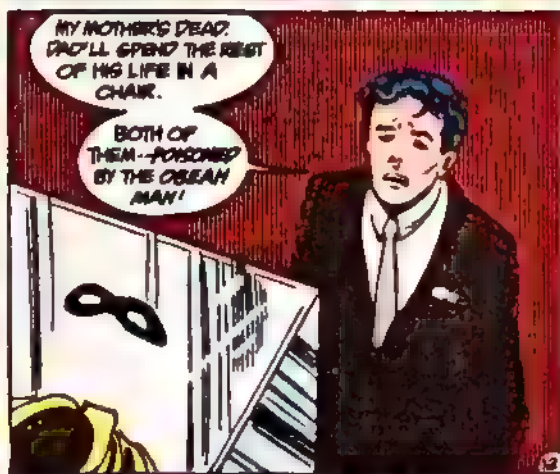
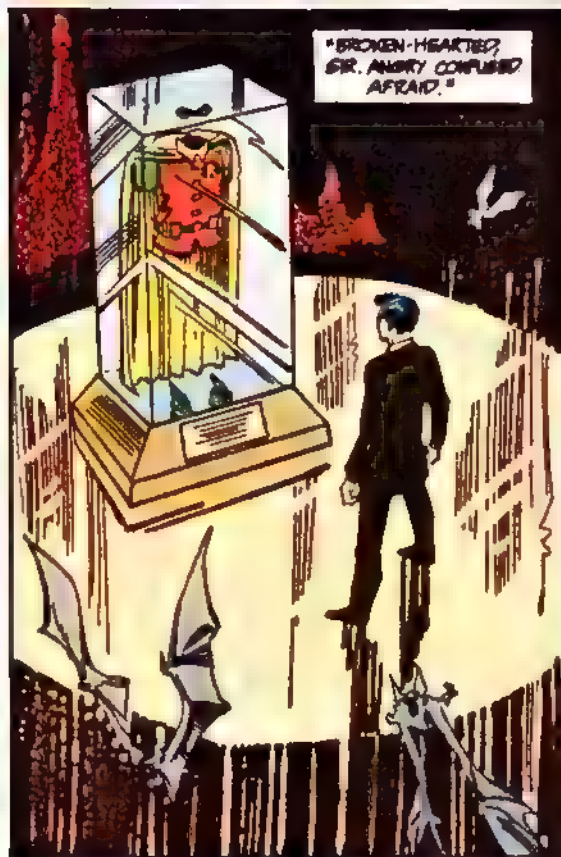
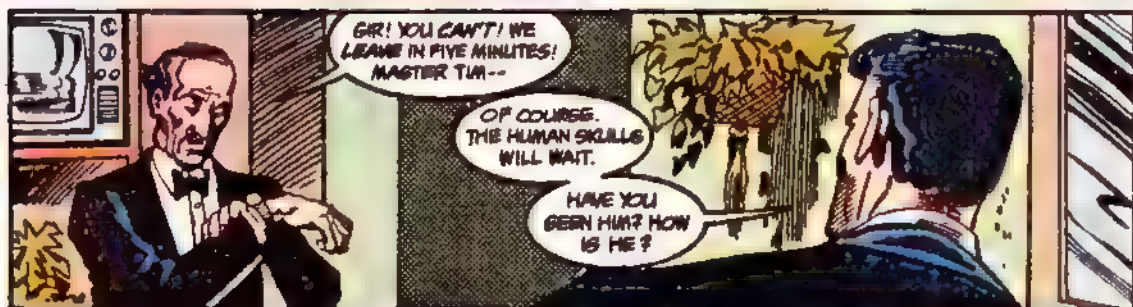
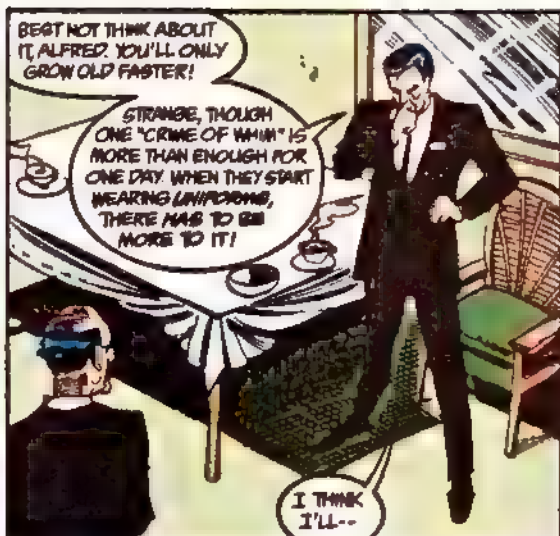
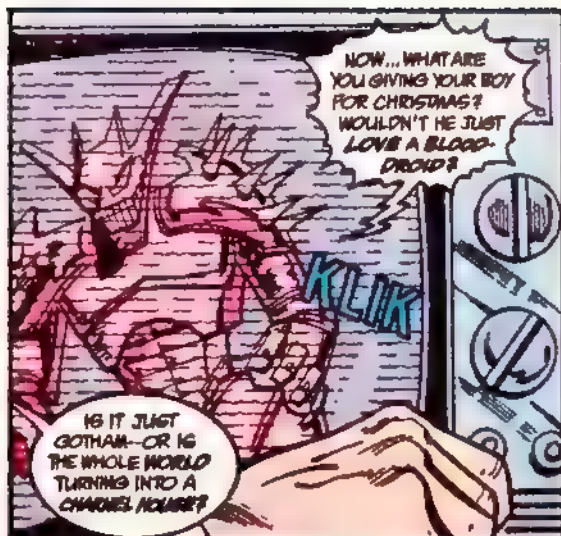






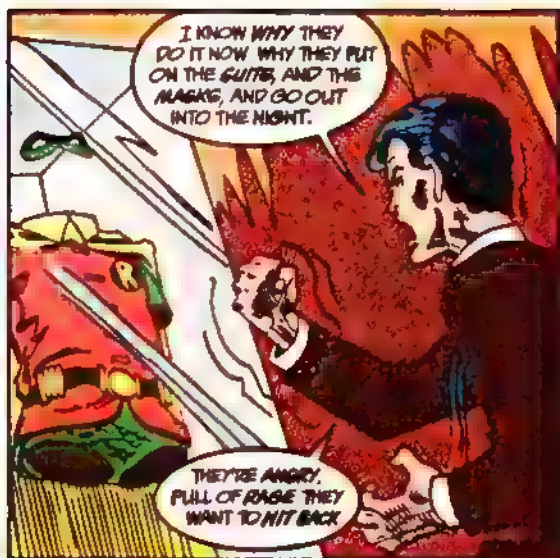








I HATE HIM! I HATE HIM!



I KNOW WHY THEY DO IT NOW WHY THEY PUT ON THE SUITS, AND THE MASKS, AND GO OUT INTO THE NIGHT.

THEY'RE ANGRY, FULL OF RAGE THEY WANT TO HIT BACK



BAMP!

THEY WANT TO FILL THE HOLE THAT'S BURNING INSIDE THEM!

THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN THAT, SON.



MUCH MORE

I KNOW

IT'S JUST--I FEEL--LIKE GOING TO HAITI MYSELF AND STRANGLING THAT CREEP WITH MY BARE HANDS!

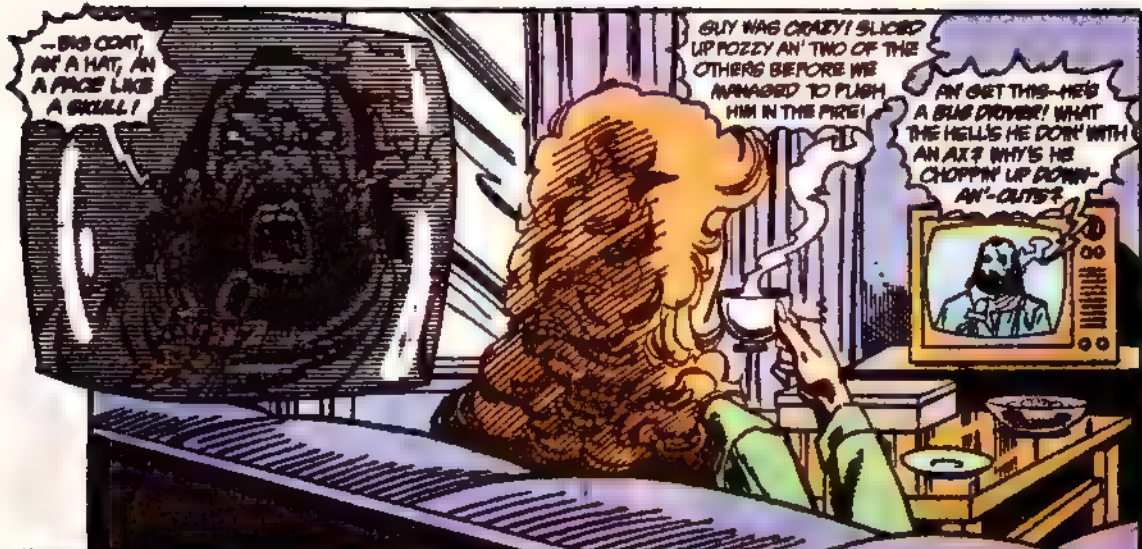


THE OBEAH MAN WILL SPEND THE REST OF HIS LIFE IN A PRISON HOSPITAL. HE'S HISTORY FORGET HIM!

BUT DON'T FIGHT AGAINST YOUR ANGER. IT'S NATURAL. ACCEPT IT. LIVE WITH IT.



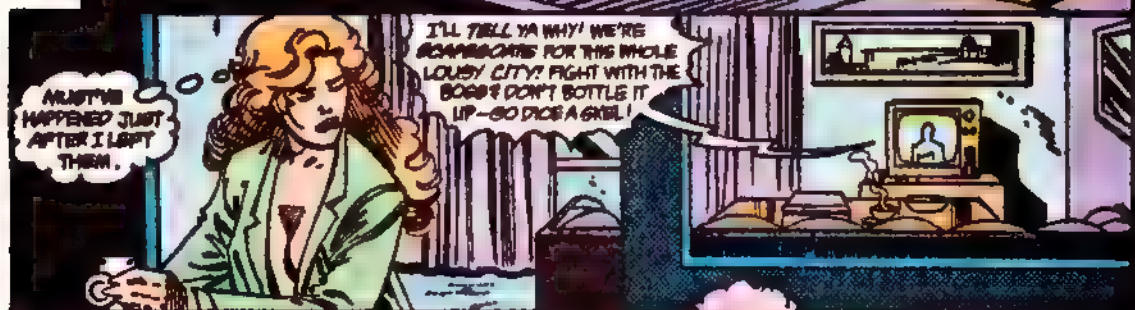
ONE DAY IT'LL BE YOUR FRIEND.



—BIG COAT,
AN A HAT, AN
A FACE LIKE
A SKULL!

GUY WAS CRAZY! SLICED
UP POZZY AN' TWO OF THE
OTHERS BEFORE WE
MANAGED TO PUSH
HIM IN THE FIRE!

AM GET THIS—HE'S
A BUS DRIVER! WHAT
THE HELL'S HE DOIN' WITH
AN AX? WHY'S HE
CHOPPIN UP DOWN-
AN'-OUTS?



MUST'VE
HAPPENED JUST
AFTER I LEFT
THEM.

I'LL TELL YA WHY! WE'RE
SCAMBOOTS FOR THIS WHOLE
LOUSY CITY! FIGHT WITH THE
BOSS? DON'T BOTTLE IT
UP—GO DICE A GIB! I



KIDS ACTIN' UP? NO
PROBLEM. GO SLICE
A LOUSY HO—

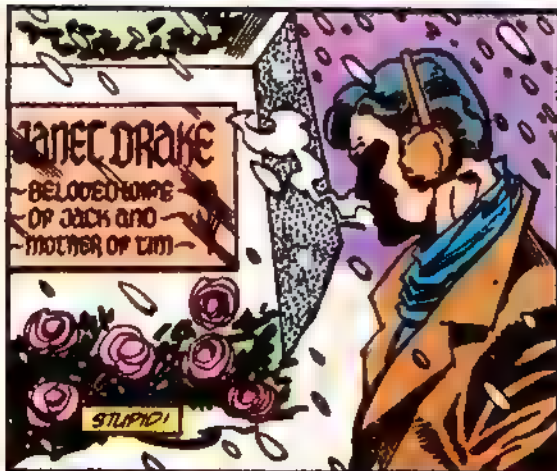
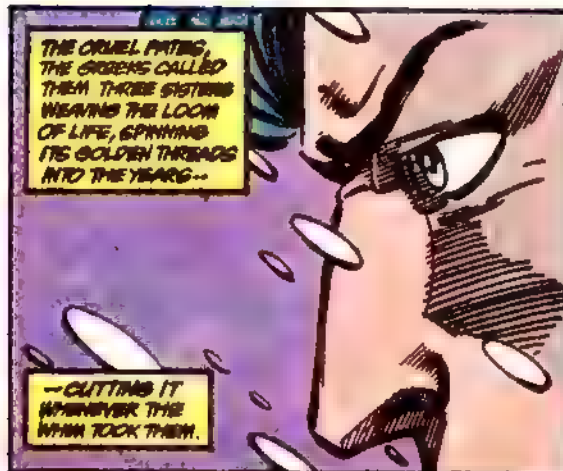
ER, THANK
YOU, MR.—ER...

HEY, DON'T
BLIT IN ON MR.
SISTER! I GOT
RIGHTS, YA
KNOW!

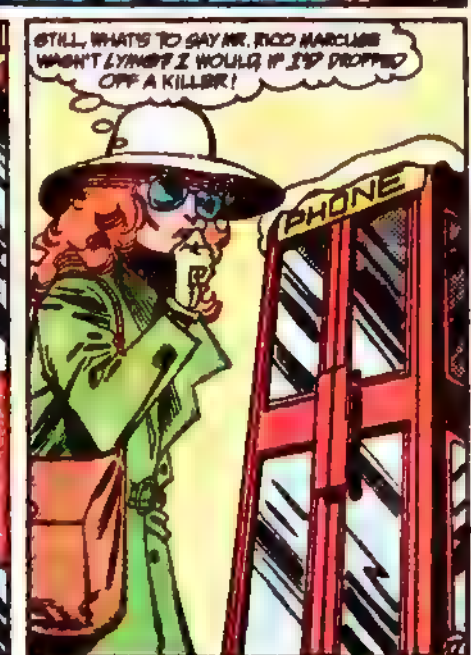
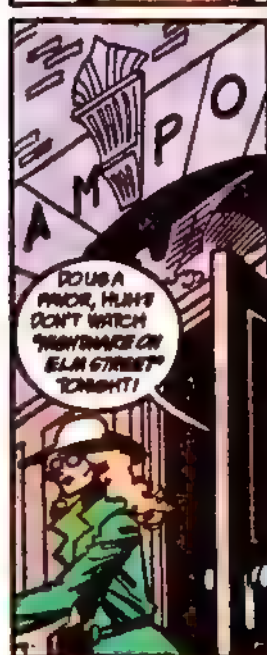
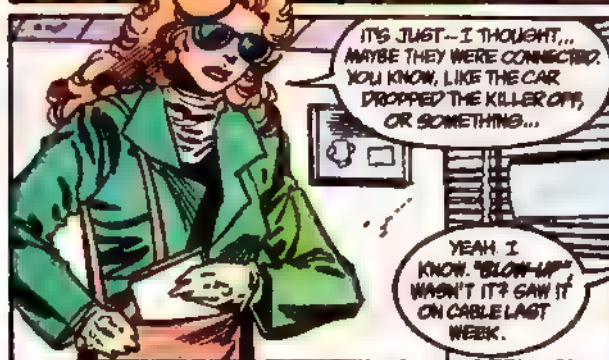
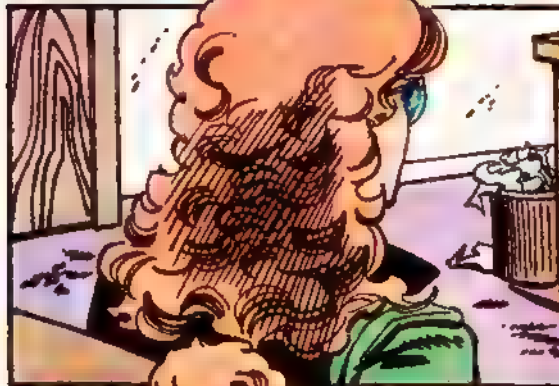
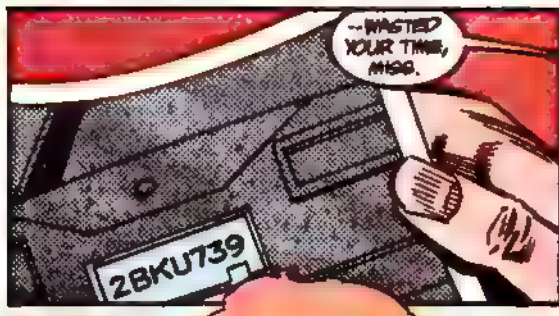


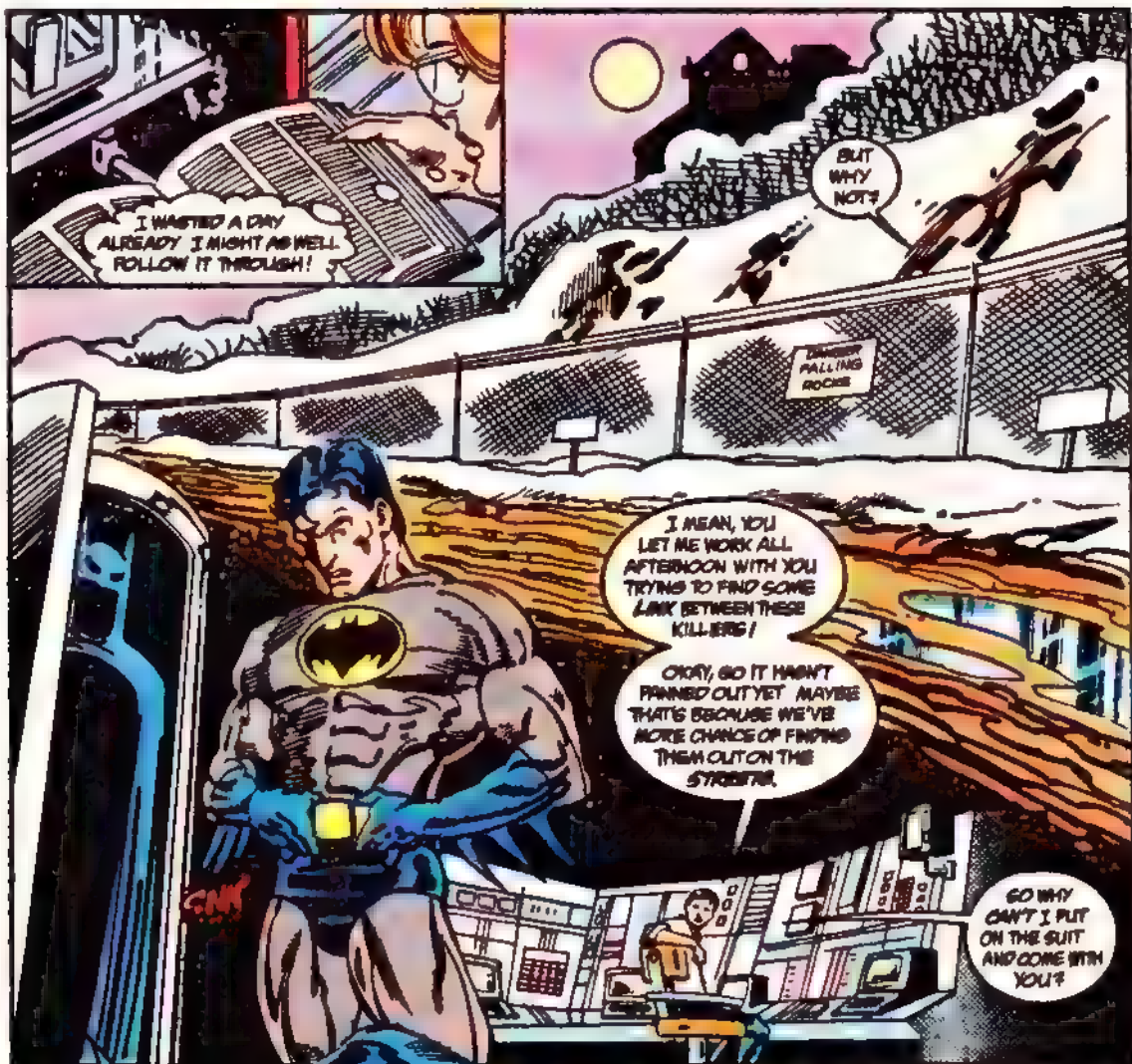
JUST LIKE THE MAN SAID!
AND BEHIND HIM—THAT'S
A CAR...

LET'S GIVE UP I
CAN BRING UP THE
LICENSE PLATE.









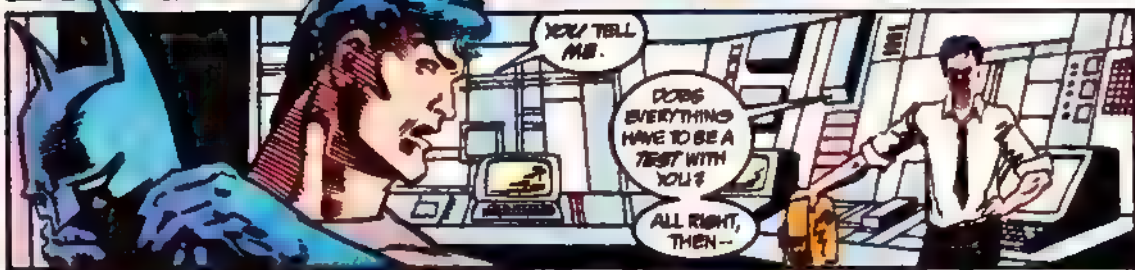
I WASTED A DAY
ALREADY I MIGHT AS WELL
FOLLOW IT THROUGH!

BUT WHY
NOT?

I MEAN, YOU
LET ME WORK ALL
AFTERNOON WITH YOU
TRYING TO FIND SOME
LINK BETWEEN THESE
KILLERS!

OKAY, SO IT HADNT
PAINED OUT YET MAYBE
THAT'S BECAUSE WE'VE
MORE CHANCE OF FINDING
THEM OUT ON THE
STREET.

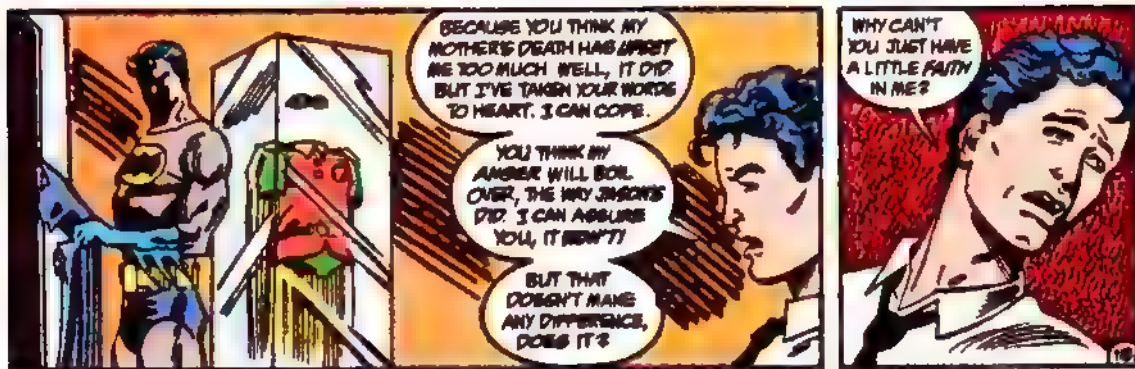
GO WHY
CAN'T I PUT
ON THE SUIT
AND COME WITH
YOU?



YOU TELL
ME.

DOES
EVERYTHING
HAVE TO BE A
TEST WITH
YOU?

ALL RIGHT,
THEN--

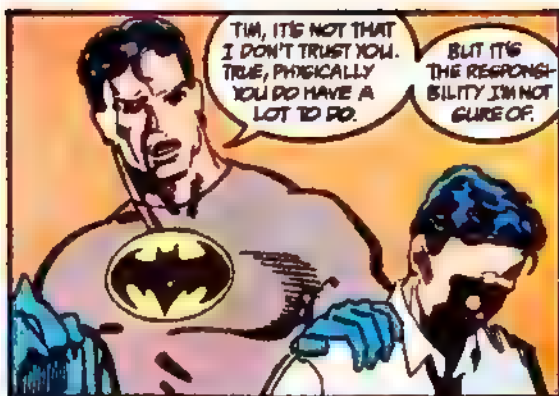


BECAUSE YOU THINK MY
MOTHER'S DEATH HAS AFFECTED
ME TOO MUCH WELL, IT DID
BUT I'VE TAKEN YOUR WORDS
TO HEART. I CAN COPE.

YOU THINK MY
ANGER WILL BOIL
OVER, THE WAY JASON'S
DID. I CAN ASSURE
YOU, IT WON'T!

BUT THAT
DOESN'T MAKE
ANY DIFFERENCE,
DOES IT?

WHY CAN'T
YOU JUST HAVE
A LITTLE FAITH
IN ME?





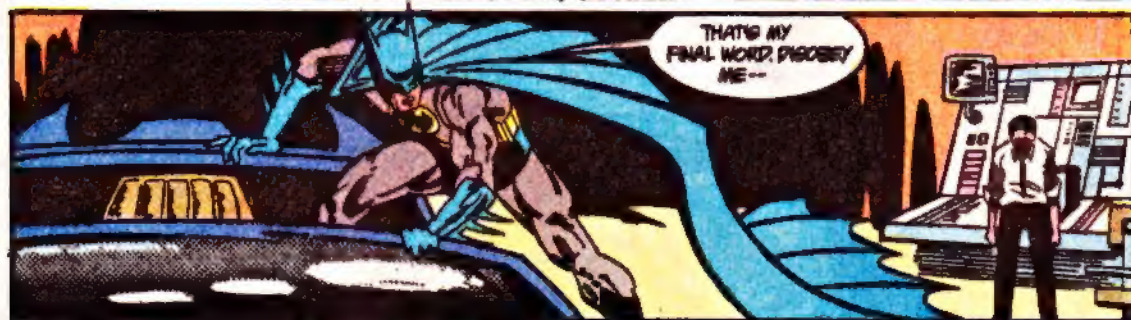
NO! IF I LISTEN
TO YOU, I'LL
NEVER DO
IT!

I'M READY
NOW! I CAN FEEL
IT— HERE! I'M NOT
A KID ANY MORE.
I'M READY!

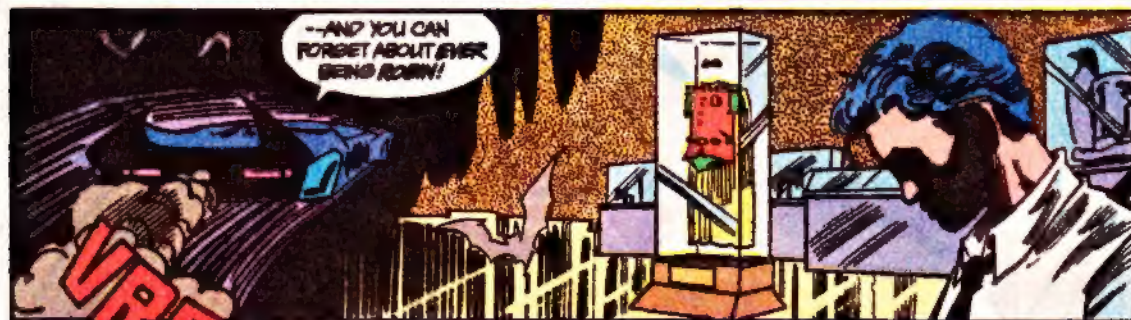


NO.

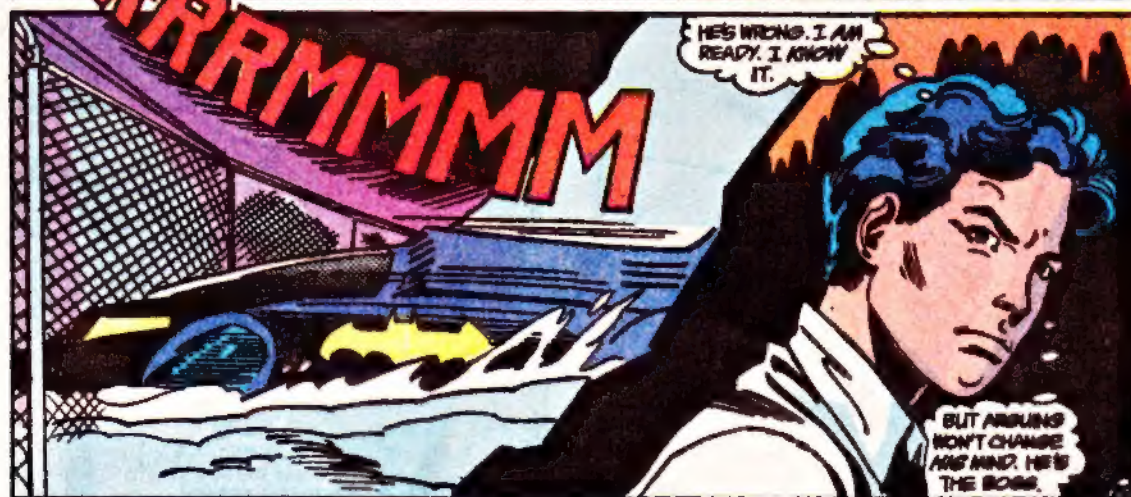
BATMAN,
PLEASE--!



THAT'S MY
FINAL WORD, DISOBEY
ME--

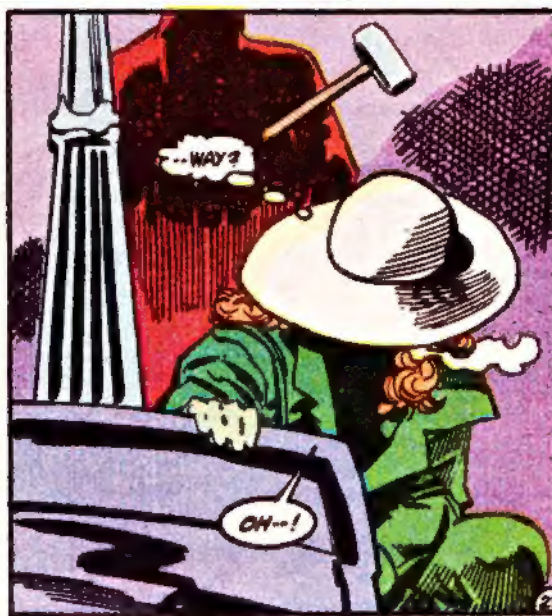


--AND YOU CAN
FORGET ABOUT EVER
BEING ROBIN!



HE'S WRONG. I AM
READY. I KNOW
IT.

BUT ARGUING
WON'T CHANGE
HIS MIND. HE'S
THE BOSS.





BAT-SIGNALS

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L-5800

Dear KC and Denny,

I have just finished BATMAN #450 and I can only describe it in one word. WOW! The art was superb, as we have all come to expect from Jim Aparo, but the storyline was most excellent and interesting. I could never imagine a Joker who couldn't laugh at things, or refused to tell jokes. It will be very fascinating to see a three-way duel between the Joker, Batman, and Mr. Bane. My only complaint is that Bruce shipped Tim off to Japan. Oh, well. I guess I would be the same after what the Clown Prince of Crime did to the old Boy Wonder.

Keep up the tremendous work—this is the best comic on sale today.

Mike Rippinger
2207 Pierce Avenue
Rockford, IL 61109

With the next two lettercols reduced to one page each due to advertising considerations, we've got a lot of ground to cover! So let's get to it—with your letters on the Joker story in #450-451!

Dear Editor:

Re: BATMAN #450

The return of the Joker. We all knew it would happen. We all knew it was an inevitable fact of our existence, like heartbreak or death. Every one of us, down deep in the shadows of our subconscious, KNEW that the Clown Prince of Crime would never die. His insane genius is too great, his evil boundless! And he killed Jason. For that, he would pay.

One thing that troubles me: Was that a flicker of conscience we saw as the tormented Joker remembered the events of the Christmas of 1988? Or was it something more understandable, more believable in that senseless psyche of the Joker? Was it remorse? Or was it just regret for his actions because of Sir Isaac Newton's law: For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction?

I also see that you have cleverly avoided the Joker/Robin confrontation that we all know is an inevitability. The Joker would then be certain that this Robin was not the same fluttering fop that had harassed him time and again. His mad genius would take great delight in watching the Batman writhe in barely controlled anger as he repeated the treatment of Jason Todd. Bruce is acutely aware of the battle that must come, and is cognizant of the fact that this battle may be to the death. Of course, we readers knew that this can-

not be, but the action will still be pulse-pounding, and our breathing will stop for precious seconds as we fear for our intrepid hero's life.

Thanks for listening.

Ted C. Ellsworth
1721 30th Street N.W.
Canton, OH 44709

Dear Denny & Marv,

In some strange sense of the word, I suppose BATMAN #450 was an "anniversary" issue—how appropriate that we should celebrate this by seeing the Joker for the first time in well over a year. Marv's explanation for the Joker's recent absence was rather surprising—the Joker was actually AFRAID to become the Joker again? Wow!

I'm pleasantly surprised to witness the attention being paid to Jim Gordon and his reaction to the Joker's return. And since the Joker obviously knows about Tim Drake (having heard of the new Robin book in BATMAN #442), he's definitely going to want to know where this kid came from—or is Batman going to prove to him that somehow Robin escaped the explosion?

(Is the Joker aware that Bruce Wayne lost his adopted son in that same part of the world at the same time that Robin was killed? If the Joker had any sanity, by now he must be figuring out Batman's true identity...)

By the way, please keep the relationship between Commissioner Gordon and Detective Hanrahan strictly platonic. To repeat a YEAR ONE type of affair would be rather cliché and perhaps just a little boring, don'tcha think?

Peter T. Chomeway
6866 Arlington Street
Vancouver, B.C.
CANADA V6S 3N9

It's funny that you mentioned YEAR ONE, as one of that story's supporting characters is due to make a reappearance in these pages very soon. Commissioner Gordon's personal life is about to get a little more confusing with the return of ... Sarah Essen, when she rejoins the Gotham City Police Force in BATMAN #456!

Dear Denny,

BATMAN #450 represents Marv Wolfman's best issue to date. With such a well used villain as the Joker, it's important to come up with an original plot, otherwise the impact of the character is lost. Marv's was a real hur-

ding. I, for one, can't remember a "Joker impersonator" before, and having the real Joker haunted by memories of his origin, just as Batman is, was a great idea, too. It helps emphasize how psychologically similar the characters are.

I also applaud Marv's portrayals of Commissioner Gordon and Detective Hanrahan. Gordon is shown as the tough, resourceful cop we all know he is and Hanrahan makes a good partner for him—beautiful, yet with a touch of steel to her personality. I hope we see more of her.

Yours sincerely,
Martin Simcox
B4 Bennett Lane, Worsley
Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 5PX
ENGLAND

NEXT ISSUE: In Part Two of "Identity Crisis," it's Christmas Eve and Gotham City cowers in fear as mass murder is committed by law-abiding citizens, driven to a frenzy by the Screamers. Can Batman halt the crime wave before the city crumbles? BATMAN #458 is by Alan Grant, Norm Breyfogle, and Steve Mitchell and features the return of Vicki Vale!

—KC Carlson
Letter Wrangling, Inc.

From the Den 

I've recently learned an elegant Japanese word that refers to what some of you think are errors in our magazines. It's *wabi* and, according to *They Have A Word For It* by Howard Rheingold, it means "a flawed detail that creates an elegant whole." Mr. Rheingold elaborates: "[Wabi] is the distinctive, aesthetic flaw that distinguishes the split of the moment in which this object was created from all other moments in eternity."

I'd like you to remember *wabi* if and when you spot what you believe is a mistake in these pages. My friend, we do not make mistakes. But every once in a while we get a wild urge to distinguish the spirit of the moment—hey, who doesn't?—and then we slip in a little *wabi*.

And we don't charge you a single extra cent for it.

DENNY